

the gentleman from California just mentioned, and the non-OPEC countries like Venezuela, Mexico, and Norway to increase production by almost 2.8 million barrels per day which will and has brought down already the price at the pump.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I think the point that the gentleman from Michigan is making is a very valid one. The Senate finished consideration of EPCA, the Energy Policy Conservation Act, last September. The Committee on Commerce in the House finished it last September. So it has been sitting somewhere between the House and the Senate languishing for 6 months right through this entire energy crisis. So the issue is why can we not, especially those of us in the Northeast who are very much dependent upon imported oil, know that the President as of midnight tomorrow night still has the authority to deploy the Strategic Petroleum Reserve that is our weapon against OPEC if he deems it to be necessary?

Why would we have allowed that authority to expire tomorrow? We could have passed it out of here this week, to give the President that authority. We deal with nations. These are the heads of governments that make these decisions. There is no free market in oil in the world. It is all done by governments acting as a cartel. If it happened in any industry in the United States, the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department would break it up. It is illegal. So our President has his own oil field, it is the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, to deploy, to use as a weapon, a bargaining tool with these other countries.

That has helped. That has helped a lot in terms of Secretary Richardson's ability to be able to use that as part of the leverage and getting the highest possible number of barrels as a concession from OPEC over the last couple of weeks. The President is saying, "I won't deploy the Strategic Petroleum Reserve if you give us a million, a million and a half, two million barrels of oil a day." As of tomorrow night, the President's authority to use this expires and all we are asking is when on the schedule will that bill be brought up so that we can give back to the President this leverage he needs in any negotiations with OPEC?

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Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, let me just comment briefly, and I think the gentleman from Massachusetts will understand that last year, September 30,

1999, we passed and sent to the President our Energy Conservation Policy Act. It was on the day that it expired. So we, with great alacrity and interest, submitted it to the President; and I think the gentleman from Massachusetts realized what the President did, he did not sign it. In fact, he waited 5 days.

So the fact that this expires is not a major crisis, and I think he realizes that from the President himself not signing it when we gave it to him last year.

To answer the gentleman from Michigan as to the point about the Department of Energy, the Department of Energy had nothing to do with the cost per gallon of energy either going from 72 under the Carter administration, the Democrat administration, down to 25 and lower; and now it is going up, notwithstanding the fact we give billions and billions and billions of dollars every day. Even the Secretary of Energy, Mr. Richardson, said we were caught napping.

So after sending billions and billions of dollars year in and year out to this Department of Energy, there are people in Congress, including myself, who felt that perhaps this agency should be reformed. It is an institution that should be changed. It is an institution that is not meeting the demands. I think Secretary Richardson would probably agree today, since he admits that "we were caught napping" after all of this money we spent. I think most people in the House agree that the Department of Energy needs to be restructured.

So that is my comment. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comment. I would just say in response to his last comment, though, that I am glad the gentleman now on his side is moving away from the question of abolishing the Department of Energy, because as the gentleman knows, the act that I referred to, that I cited, is called the Department of Energy Abolishment Act. The gentleman says he just wants to reform it now. So it is good to see there is some movement away from abolishing the department, which has, among other things under its jurisdiction, oil conservation programs, research and renewable energy conservation and research programs; and I could just go on and on and on, and I will with the help of my friend from Massachusetts.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY).

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I again thank the gentleman for yielding.

I think people have to understand that part of the Contract with America is the pledge to abolish the Department of Energy. So the Department of Energy, in 1995, 1996, 1997, they were just fighting to exist, not to put together an energy policy that would make us

independent of OPEC. Here we sit on the day before the President's authority expires, and we still have not produced a bill out here that we can vote on that can give him that authority to continue to keep that leverage strong against OPEC.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlemen for both of their comments, but I would not want the House to be left with the impression that somehow it is the House that conducts diplomatic efforts; it is the House that is involved in negotiating with oil ministers; that it is the House that has the discretion through Executive Order to release all or any part of the Strategic Petroleum Oil Reserve.

Let us see if we cannot work together in a bipartisan fashion to actually come to a solution on this reauthorization; and hopefully, jointly, we can keep the pressure on the administration to continue to use more diplomatic efforts to increase production, because in the end, I think that is the best solution for American consumers and for businesses.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I think due to the spirit in which that was given we accept that, and we thank the gentleman for his constructive comments; and we look forward to working with him in the weeks ahead.

ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR H.R. 1776, AMERICAN HOMEOWNERSHIP AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2000

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon a Dear Colleague letter was sent to all colleagues informing them that the Committee on Rules is expected to meet the week of April 3 to grant a rule which may restrict amendments for consideration of H.R. 1776, the American Homeownership and Economic Opportunity Act of 2000.

Any Member contemplating an amendment to H.R. 1776 should submit 55 copies of the amendment and one copy of a brief explanation to the Committee on Rules no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 4. The Committee on Rules office is located upstairs in H-312, as the presiding officer knows very well, here in the Capitol.

Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure that their amendments are properly drafted and should check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain that their amendments comply with the Rules of the House.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 701

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 701.